

Griffin No. 1 Coke Works
Bessemer Coke Company
Along Cats Run, SE of Masontown Borough
Masontown Vicinity
Fayette County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-260

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

GRIFFIN NO. 1 COKE WORKS

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HAER No. PA-260

Location: Along Cats Run, SE of Masontown Borough, Nicholson Township, Masontown Vicinity, Fayette County, Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: ca. 1900

Builder: Bessemer Coke Company

Present Owner: unknown

Present Use: abandoned

Significance: During peak production, Griffin No. 1 Coke Works operated one battery of double-block rectangular coke ovens. Sections of these ovens remain and are considered some of the best preserved rectangular ovens in Fayette County.

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Blair, Cambria, Fayette, and Indiana counties as the first step in identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Fayette County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (1990), edited by Sarah H. Heald and produced by HABS/HAER for the National Park Service.

Compiler: Christine E. Davis, Gray Fitzsimons, Sarah H. Heald, and Rolla L. Queen, Historians

History:

DESCRIPTION: Located along Cats Run just outside the southeast boundary of Masontown Borough, the Griffin No. 1 coal mine and coke works had one battery of double-block rectangular coke ovens. When in full production, 310 ovens were in operation. Sections of the ovens remain in moderately deteriorated condition and the site is heavily overgrown. These and the coke ovens at Allison No. 1 are the best preserved rectangular ovens in Fayette County.

Virtually nothing remains of the mine except a large slate pile below Fairview Street. Originally the drift mine led to a tippie that stood just east of the coke ovens. A trestle from the mine mouth, which was on the north side of Cats Run, crossed the stream to the tippie. In addition to the mine and tippie, two mine buildings stood just east of the mine mouth. This included the machine shop and barn. Both have been demolished. East of the coke ovens on the south side of Cats Run stood a powerhouse and a bathhouse. These were probably brick buildings and are no longer extant.

Also located along Cats Run west of Griffin No. 1, the Griffin No. 2 works probably had rectangular coke ovens similar to its sister operation. When in full production, 196 ovens were in operation. Access to the Griffin No. 2 works was limited due to private property restrictions. Just as the sections of the coke ovens at Griffin No. 1 are in moderately deteriorated condition, it is likely that some of ovens at Griffin No. 2 also survive. The latter site has seen little man made change to its landscape; however, it is very overgrown with vegetation and trees.

HISTORY: The Griffin No. 1 coal and coke works were built by the Bessemer Coke Company and placed in operation sometime between 1899 and 1903. In 1903, the plant had 310 employees, 160 of whom were engaged in coke production. The coke plant had 310 coke ovens available and produced 150,142 tons of coke in that year. By 1921 the Hillman Coal and Coke Company acquired the plant.

The Griffin No. 2 coal and coke works were also built by the Bessemer Coke Company and placed in operation between 1899 and 1903. In 1903, the plant had 181 employees, eighty of whom were engaged in coke production. The coke plant had 149 coke ovens available and produced 72,043 tons of coke in that year. At its peak, the plant had approximately 196 coke ovens available. It is not known when the mine and coke works closed.

Sources:

Map of Connellsville Coke Region and Adjacent Territory, Western Pennsylvania. n.p., ca. 1905 - 1913.

Map of the Connellsville Coke Region and Adjacent Fields. Uniontown: South Penn Engineering Company, 1913.

Map of the Connellsville Coke Region and Adjacent Fields. Uniontown: South Penn Engineering Company, 1921.

Report of the Department of Mines of Pennsylvania: Bituminous Region, 1903. Harrisburg: William Stanley Ray, State Printer 1904.